

Remarks/Arguments:

With the present response, claims 1, 2, 4-8, 10-13, 15, 16, and 18-21 are under consideration, with claims 3, 9, 17, 22, and 23 having been withdrawn pursuant to a previous Restriction Requirement.

Claim rejections

Claims 1, 2, 4-8, 10-13, 15, 16, and 18-21 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,527,353 to Schmitt et al. ("Schmitt") in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,891,193 to Robinson ("Robinson") and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,395,019 to Chobotov ("Chobotov"). Of the rejected claims, claims 1, 10, 15, 16, 20, and 21 are independent claims.

Claims 1 and 10

Each of amended claims 1 and 10 now recites, *inter alia*, a stent-graft comprising a graft having a fastening element, a stent disposed around an exterior portion of the graft, and a locking element coupled to the stent and to the fastening element, wherein the locking element does not pass through the graft.

The claimed stent is coupled to a locking element, which in turn is coupled to a fastening element, which in turn is coupled to the graft. Consequently, the stent is separated from the graft through two elements, the locking element *and* the fastening element.

None of Schmitt, Robinson, and Chobotov discloses or suggests the claimed limitation of a locking element coupled to the stent and to the fastening element, wherein the locking element does not pass through the graft, as is recited in amended claims 1 and 10. Further, no combination of Schmitt, Robinson, and Chobotov provides the claimed limitation.

Further, each of claims 1 and 10 recites the limitation of "a stent disposed around an exterior portion of the graft." None of Schmitt, Robinson, and Chobotov discloses or suggests the claimed limitation of the stent being disposed around *the exterior of the graft*, as is recited in amended claims 1 and 10. Further, no combination of Schmitt, Robinson, and Chobotov provides the claimed limitation.

Because the proposed combination of Schmitt, Robinson, and Chobotov fails to disclose or suggest all of the limitations of amended claims 1 and 10, Applicant respectfully submits that the proposed combination fails to provide a *prima facie*

case of obviousness, and that the rejections of claims 1 and 10, as amended, are improper. Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and allowance of claims 1 and 10.

Claim 15

Amended claim 15 recites, *inter alia*, a stent-graft for defining a fluid passageway in a body lumen. The stent-graft comprises a stent having a plurality of stent elements and a graft. The graft comprises a plurality of fastening elements. Each of said plurality of *fastening elements* projects into a space defined between the stent elements and entirely within the space, with the fastening elements being secured to said stent.

Schmitt, Robinson, and Chobotov are discussed above with respect to claims 1 and 10. None of Schmitt, Robinson, or Chobotov disclose or suggest the limitation of *fastening elements* projecting into a space defined between stent elements and entirely within the space, as is recited in amended claim 15. The proposed combination of the cited references, therefore, fails to provide a *prima facie* case of obviousness.

Claim 16

Claim 16 recites, *inter alia*, a stent-graft comprising a stent and a graft. The graft comprises a plurality of fastening elements. The stent surrounds the graft and is secured thereto through the fastening elements, wherein *the graft is attached to the stent with the fastening elements projecting through the stent and a plurality of looped locking elements securing the fastening elements to the stent*.

Schmitt, Robinson, and Chobotov are discussed above with respect to claims 1 and 10. None of Schmitt, Robinson, or Chobotov disclose or suggest the limitation of *a graft attached to a stent with the fastening elements projecting through the stent and a plurality of looped locking elements securing the fastening elements to the stent*, as is recited in claim 16. The proposed combination of the cited references, therefore, fails to provide a *prima facie* case of obviousness.

Claim 20

Amended claim 20 recites, *inter alia*, a stent-graft comprising a stent, a graft having *fastening elements* extending outwardly therefrom, and a *locking element coupled to the stent and at least one of the fastening elements of the graft*.

Schmitt, Robinson, and Chobotov are discussed above with respect to claims 1 and 10. None of Schmitt, Robinson, or Chobotov disclose or suggest the limitation of a graft having *fastening element* and a *locking element coupled to a stent and at least one of the fastening elements of the graft*, as is recited in amended claim 20. The proposed combination of the cited references, therefore, fails to provide a *prima facie* case of obviousness.

Claim 21

Claim 21 recites, *inter alia*, a stent-graft comprising a stent and a graft having a plurality of fastening elements projecting through the stent and a plurality looped locking elements secured to the stent.

Schmitt, Robinson, and Chobotov are discussed above with respect to claims 1 and 10. None of Schmitt, Robinson, or Chobotov disclose or suggest the limitation of a graft having a plurality of fastening elements projecting through the stent and a plurality looped locking elements secured to the stent, as is recited in claim 21. The proposed combination of the cited references, therefore, fails to provide a *prima facie* case of obviousness.

Dependent claims

Dependent claims 2 and 4-8 depend from claim 1; claims 11-13 depend from claim 10; claim 18 depends from claim 15; and claim 19 depends from claim 16. Applicant respectfully submits that claims 2, 4-8, 11-13, 18, and 19 are patentable over the proposed combination of Schmitt, Robinson, and Chobotov for at least the same reasons set forth above with respect to claims 1, 10, 15, and 16. Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and allowance of claims 2, 4-8, 11-13, 18, and 19.

Upon allowance of claims 1, 15, and 20, Applicant respectfully submits that withdrawn claims 3, 9, 17, and 22 are allowable as being dependent upon allowed

base claims and will thus be allowable as well. Reentry and allowance of claims 3, 9, 17, and 22 are also respectfully requested.

Conclusion

Based on the above amendments and remarks, Applicant respectfully submits that the present application is in condition for allowance. Applicant respectfully requests prompt reconsideration and allowance of the present application.

Respectfully submitted,



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